



M. JODI RELL
GOVERNOR
EDWIN R. RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER

Department of Consumer Protection

FACT SHEET: What to Look For When Buying Toys

The Department of Consumer Protection is committed to protecting the health and safety of Connecticut citizens in their use of consumer products, including toys and items for babies and children. Each year the agency conducts hundreds of toy inspections, and where appropriate, removes unsafe items from store shelves.

The Department has developed the following suggestions for parents and others shopping for children's playthings.

- **Watch for small parts.** The law requires that all toys intended for use by children age 3 and under **do not** contain small parts, since they can pose a fatal choking hazard. Nonetheless, check them carefully yourself, both the accessories, (such as the plastic baby bottle) and the parts of the toy itself that may detach during use, (such as the eyes on the stuffed bears.) *Children under 3—and even some who are a bit older—tend to put almost anything in their mouths, so this is a very important safety precaution!*
 - **Toys intended for children age 3-7 must be labeled if they contain small parts.** Keep this in mind if there are younger siblings with access to the toys.
 - **Check age appropriateness.** Labels will give you a very general guide, but you need to keep the *individual* child in mind. Choose toys appropriate for the age, maturity, skills and interest level of the child. If you are unsure, run your gift ideas by the parents first. An electric train or chemistry set may be fine for one 10-year-old, but not for another.
- Also, toys that are too difficult to use will just go to waste.
- Be sure the toy has no **sharp edges or points, is secured with screws rather than nails, and has wood that is well-sanded.**
 - **Riding toys** should have wide wheelbases and be sturdy enough to avoid tipping over.
 - **Read the label.** Along with age warnings, some toys may be extremely complex to use. Will the toy require many batteries, chargers, a large storage space or a big play area? Will it require **parental supervision**?
 - Don't forget to safely **discard plastic wrappings** that can cause suffocation.
 - When buying for **babies**, make sure the gifts have no long strings or laces, detachable parts, no water or sand toys. Stick to soft blocks, well-made rattles and squeeze toys, cloth toys.
 - Once the child is **6 months old or able to sit up**, remove crib gyms and mobiles.
 - **Marbles, uninflated balloons and other everyday objects** pose fatal choking hazards to any young children who still put things in their mouths.
 - **Approved helmets** are critical for bikes, roller blades and scooters, and **knee and elbow pads** for the latter two. Helmets should have an ANSI or Snell Foundation label and be fitted to the child.